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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP AND EAP/CM

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TAGS: CH PINR PGOV PREL

SUBJECT: VISIT OF CONGRESSMEN KIRK, LARSEN AND FEENEY TO JIUQUAN

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Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY: ESTH COUNSELOR DEBORAH SELIGSOHN. REASONS 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: Congressional U.S.-China Working Group Representatives Mark Kirk, Rick Larsen and Tom Feeney visited the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, also known as the Shuangchengzi Missile and Space Test Center, the site of China's manned space launches, on January 13. In this rare visit, which we believe to be the first by U.S. government representatives, the three Congressmen noted the Center's impressive level of technology, which includes a 25-story vehicle assembly building, a 750-ton launch pad and a 102 m tall launch tower. End Summary.

¶2. (S/NF) Congressional U.S.-China Working Group Representatives Mark Kirk, Rick Larsen and Tom Feeney traveled to remote Gansu province at the invitation of Gansu Province Assistant Governor Liu Xiaoming. The National People's Congress (NPC) served as the official government host of this National Committee on U.S. China Relations (NCUSCR) sponsored trip. Jiuquan is one of China's three satellite launch facilities and the center of China's manned space program.

¶3. (S/NF) It took the delegation just under four hours to travel the extremely isolated road from Jiayuguan to Jiuquan. On approach, there are two or three small guard posts. The road then leads to a large wall, with another guard at what seemed to be the primary entrance. After passing through the gate, the road continued for approximately an additional half mile before entering the primary facility. The delegation commented that they went through no security screening to enter the facility. They also noted a full power plant, as well as two wide "smoke stacks."

¶4. (S/NF) Upon arrival, Space Commander Zhang Yulin (Note: No name cards were given, so the name is as heard by the delegation. End note.) and Deputy Director General He Xinmin greeted and presented flowers to the delegation. DDG He officially welcomed the delegation, called for increased Sino-American space cooperation, and briefed the delegation on the Jiuquan Center. Built in 1958, Jiuquan is the center of China's space program. Since 1970, forty missions have launched from Jiuquan, with a 100% success rate. The year 2005 saw one spacecraft and three satellite missions. DDG He proceeded to take the delegation on a tour of the facility.

¶5. (S/NF) The "technical area," as referred to by DDG He, contains facilities dedicated to aerospace assembly and payload preparation, astronaut preparation, and "test and launch center." The 100m, 25-story high vehicle assembly

building, alternately referred to as the vertical test building, dominates the landscape. It contains a rotary platform, a fixed platform, an extremely large crane, and six lifting doors, each weighing twenty tons. The facility further contains three "vertical" platforms. Prior to launches, the rocket is "wheeled in," erected, and put onto the mobile launch platform. There, staff test all subsystems after vertical assembly, and conduct a general rocket test, as well as a rocket and spacecraft combine test. The facility allows for two simultaneous rocket tests and assembly at the same time.

¶6. (S/NF) A railway transfer device comes out to put the rocket onto a trailer, just hours before the scheduled launches. It then takes approximately one hour for the trailer to take the rocket approximately 1500 meters to the 750 ton launch pad. The 102 meter tall launch tower contains ten "walking" platform levels above ground. At the time of the launch, China applies a "release and then light" technique, as opposed to NASA's "light and then release" technique. According to DDG He, China has "changed everything" at the Jiuquan facility for the success of the manned space program.

¶7. (S/NF) In answer to questions by members of the delegation, officials stated that China's annual space budget is nineteen billion RMB. Approximately USD 2.3 billion, this constitutes approximately one sixth of the 2005 defense budget. They also mentioned tentative plans to build a new launch facility on Hainan Island, but claim that this facility has not yet even received budget allocation. They plan, however that the site will definitely be developed with the expansion of the lunar exploration program.

¶8. (S/NF) The delegation traveled to Jiuquan on a military-provided van. Gansu Provincial People's Congress Vice Chairman Cheng Youqing informed ESTHoff that she would

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not be allowed to accompany the delegation on the trip. After a lengthy discussion with the officials, Congressman Kirk related that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) refused to allow her access to the facility, alternately justifying that this trip was for the legislative branch only or that ESTHoff had not asked permission sufficiently far in advance.

The delegation kindly shared its notes with ESTHoff to prepare this cable.

¶9. (U) Participants:

U.S. Delegation

Representative Mark Kirk (R-IL)
Representative Rick Larsen (D-WA)
Representative Tom Feeney (R-FL)
Stephen Orlins, President, National Committee on U.S.-China Relations
Richard Goldberg, U.S.-China Working Group Co-Staff Director
Dr. Yang Hong, Bryant University

Chinese Delegation (incomplete)

PLA Lieutenant General Li Yuan Zheng, NPC Foreign Affairs Committee member, former facility commander of Jiuquan
PLA Deputy Director General Sen.Col. He Winmin (International Cooperation Planning Bureau, International Cooperation Department, General Equipment Headquarters)
DCM Chinese Embassy in Washington Su Ge
Gansu Provincial People's Congress Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee Cheng Youqing
Gansu Provincial People's Congress Member of the Standing Committee Wang Su Yin
Gansu Provincial People's Congress Member of the Standing Committee An Chen Guang
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